



# The Genocide Education Project

November 30, 2015

History-Social Science Subject Matter Committee  
Instructional Quality Commission  
1430 N Street, Suite #5111  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: History-Social Science Framework

Dear Committee Members,

We write to recommend revisions to the current draft (10/1/15) of the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade History-Social Science Curriculum Framework, as it pertains to instruction of the Armenian Genocide, including the United States' response, and its critical connection to the Holocaust.

Our previous letter of October 7, 2015 (attached) outlines the critical factual and contextual errors in the draft and proposed revised text. In addition to that revised text, which we have included below, we recommend two brief additional sections, which serve to help teachers and students understand the interdependence of historical events across time and geography, and how both action and inaction have profound effects on the course of humanity.

During your November 20<sup>th</sup> meeting, you indicated that further revisions would be made to the framework, including language relating to the Armenian Genocide. We urge you to incorporate the following language into the framework (#1 is a re-statement of proposed text in our 10/7/15 letter, attached.)

1. We propose replacing lines 619-633 on page 456 of the current framework with the following text, which corrects the errors in the current draft revision and more fully serves the broad goals of the framework:

*In 1915, as the Ottoman Empire declined, the Turkish government carried out a systematic genocide against the Armenian population that had been living on its historic homeland in what is now eastern Turkey. Turkish authorities first arrested hundreds of Armenian political and intellectual leaders, sending them to their deaths; Armenian men were conscripted into work camps where they were killed outright or through exhaustion; The remaining Armenians were ordered onto death marches into the Syrian desert, during which they were subjected to rape, torture, mutilation, starvation, holocausts in desert caves, kidnapping and forced Turkification and Islamization.*

*Approximately 1.5 million Armenians, more than half of the population, were eliminated in this way, virtually all their personal and community properties were seized by the government, and more than 500,000 innocent people were forced into exile during the period from 1915 to 1923.*

*Within the context of human rights and genocide, students should learn of the Ottoman government's planned systematic annihilation of the Armenian population in 1915. The Armenian Genocide that opened the twentieth century would be followed by the Holocaust and others in Cambodia, Rwanda, and Darfur at the opening of the twenty-first century. Students should also examine the reactions of other governments, including that of the United States, and world opinion during and after the Armenian genocide. Teachers can introduce the history of the Near East Relief organization established by the former U.S. ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, Henry Morgenthau. Near East Relief came to the aid of hundreds of thousands of Armenian Genocide survivors through the establishment of orphanages, food and vocational programs, etc. Teachers can also use the example of the first international aid project of the Red Cross, that of helping Armenian Genocide survivors, and the prevalent use of the phrase, "Remember the starving Armenians!" as a means to demonstrate to students the profound effect the Armenian Genocide had on the American public. They should examine the effects of the genocide on the remaining Armenian people, who were deprived of their historic homeland, and the ways in which it became a prototype of subsequent genocides. What were the consequences of World War I for nations, ethnic groups, and people?*

2. At the end of the section about WWII, the Holocaust, and the establishment of an international law against genocide, it's very instructive to draw the connection to the Armenian Genocide. In keeping with the framework's intention of encouraging analytical thinking about the intersection of personal interests, power, human rights, and civic engagement, we propose adding the following text on page 470, line 937:

*Teachers should guide students in an examination of the meaningful links between the Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust. Austrian-Jewish lawyer, Rafael Lemkin, invented the word "genocide" and led the campaign for its criminalization in response to the lack of accountability and reparation for the Armenian Genocide.*

*Emboldened by this lack of accountability, Adolf Hitler said to his generals on the eve of their invasion of Poland, "Who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians?" Numerous German military officers who had been stationed in Turkey during WWI, were aware of the Ottoman regime's plan to destroy the Armenians, and some of them even issued orders for the deportation of Armenians. Without penalty, some later became leaders within the Nazi military apparatus that carried out the Holocaust.*

3. U.S. History does not happen in isolation from events around the globe. The scope and extent of the U.S. humanitarian response to the Armenian Genocide was huge, unprecedented, and has been virtually un-replicated since that time, making it an

important part of U.S. History and an effective vehicle to convey key goals of the framework, for example, "...students should evaluate the effectiveness of efforts to address social and political problems... analyze historical and contemporary means of changing societies, promoting the common good... deepen their appreciation for civic virtues, etc." We propose the addition of the following language to the Grade Eleven: United States History and Geography section, beginning on Line 347 of Page 520:

*Wilson's grave concerns regarding the first modern era genocide perpetrated by the Turkish government of the Ottoman Empire against their Armenian subjects was reflected in one of his Fourteen Points, which proposed: "...the other nationalities which are now under Turkish rule should be assured an undoubted security of life and an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development..."*

With the end of the war, Wilson was heralded as a hero in Europe when he traveled there to attend the Paris Peace Conference. Despite his significant role in designing the Versailles Treaty which ended the war, Wilson ultimately could not convince Congress to join the League of Nations.

*The events of World War I also solidified a new movement within civil society to advocate for international and provide humanitarian aid to people in other countries. The American Red Cross established its first international aid project in the wake of the Turkish massacres of 200,000 Armenians in the 1890's, and Clara Barton, founder of the Red Cross, even travelled to Constantinople to try to persuade Ottoman authorities to stop the violence against Armenians.*

*WWI further transformed the scale of international humanitarian aid efforts carried out by Americans. This was exemplified by the creation of the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief, later incorporated by an act of Congress in 1919 and renamed Near East Relief. Through an unprecedented publicity campaign across the U.S., Near East Relief raised over \$116,000,000 — equivalent to nearly two billion dollars today — and provided food, clothing, medical treatment, and shelter to genocide survivors, including 132,000 children, who were raised and educated in orphanages across the region. The refrain, "Remember the starving Armenians," became commonplace in American households at the time, demonstrating this new interest in using American economic strength to help others in faraway places.*

We thank you for your consideration and your work in updating California's History-Social Science Framework.

Sincerely,



Roxanne Makasdjian  
Founder, Member of the Board of Directors  
The Genocide Education Project